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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 000057

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DEPT FOR WHA/CEN, CA/VO

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [CVIS](#) [HO](#)  
SUBJECT: REACTION TO LATEST VISA REVOCATIONS

Classified By: CDA Simon Henshaw for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Honduran media have reported widely and mostly accurately on the decision January 18 to revoke the U.S. visas of de facto cabinet members and supporters following de facto President Micheletti's failure to step aside prior to the January 27 inauguration. Commentary from the media and individuals whose visas were revoked have continued the theme of &respect for U.S. sovereignty8 used by many following the last round of visa cancellations, with a few expressing pride or bitterness over the decision. Micheletti hinted publicly that there may be repercussions for American citizens attempting to visit Honduras. Private calls to the Consul General from cabinet members have focused on their desire to regain their visas and to distance themselves from the political aspects of their jobs. The real result of the revocations, Micheletti's decision to take a leave of absence prior to the inauguration, will be reported septel. End Summary.

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Visa Revocation Notifications  
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¶2. (C) On January 18, the Embassy informed 25 de facto cabinet members, advisors and supporters of the prudential revocation of their U.S. visas by letter from the Consul General. All letters, with one exception, were delivered by Embassy drivers to their intended recipients. Armida Lopez Contreras, head of the pro-de facto Union Civica Democratica (UCD), was contacted via fax as she has no fixed work address.

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Public Reaction  
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¶3. (SBU) Reaction in the media was quick, with several of those whose visas were revoked making public statements the same afternoon. Youth Minister Luis Orteiz expressed surprise that his visa had not been revoked earlier, said he disagreed with the decision, but said he respected the authority of the United States to make it. Culture Minister Myrna Castro complained bitterly of the continuance of this &stupid policy8 of punishing those who defended Honduran democracy and wondered where the United States had been when President Zelaya was threatening to turn the country into a dictatorship. Presidential advisor Javier Valladares chose this moment to confirm publicly the revocation of his visa, which was cancelled in October 2009. All three described the cancellation as a badge of honor for their defense of democracy.

¶4. (SBU) Media commentators have reacted without hysteria,

several reading one of the Consul General,s letters over the air in its entirety. Most noted that the visas were taken away from the de facto regime after a January 15 U.S. deadline for implementation of the Tegucigalpa/San Jose Accord passed without action, although some expressed confusion over the timing of the action, given the proximity of the inauguration. Callers to radio and TV programs mostly complained of U.S. interference in Honduran sovereignty for attempting to pressure Micheletti to step down. One editorial in the conservative &El Heraldos said, as a side note, that the cancellations were done out of U.S. frustration at the de facto regime,s intransigence. In general, though, Haiti and the apparent deal to allow President Zelaya to depart Honduras for the Dominican Republic have been the focus of media attention.

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Private Response  
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¶5. (C) As on previous occasions, several of those whose visas were revoked contacted the Consul General immediately. Health Minister Noe Villafranca and Ministry of International Cooperation (SETCO) Technical Secretary Hung Pacheco both made strong efforts to distance themselves from the politics of the de facto regime, emphasizing their credentials as career professionals who had served under previous administrations, including President Zelaya,s. They both requested meetings with the Ambassador and Consul General in the near future to discuss &getting their visas back.8 One de facto vice minister called to confirm his visa had not been revoked (it had not) while one pro-regime congresswoman

called asking if her visa revocation letter had been lost as she had not yet received it (her visa was not revoked).

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Reaction from Micheletti  
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¶6. (SBU) Micheletti, whose recent frequent press appearances have had a decidedly triumphalist tone, told one paper, the center-right &La Tribuna,8 that Honduras could take reciprocal measures by declaring any American citizen who comes here &unwelcome,8 but he did not specify if he meant American diplomats, tourists, or residents in Honduras. In an appearance the morning of January 21 on a widely watched television talk show, however, he announced his intention to take a leave of absence, a decision he described as his own and unrelated to any action taken by the international community (details reported septel).

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Comment  
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¶7. (C) Comment: Post believes it unlikely that the de facto regime will take reciprocal action against U.S. diplomats or private citizens as one of its final acts before leaving the scene. Though the sentiment of the media, which is almost all pro-regime, is predictably against the visa revocations, this action has once again had the desired, though belated, effect, with Micheletti apparently finally agreeing to provide President-elect Lobo the political and diplomatic space he needs to begin the process of national reconciliation and reintegration into the international community. End Comment.  
HENSHAW